

## BRANDING RELIGION IN THE AGE OF CONSUMERISM

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – taking in account that consumption of spirituality and more precisely brand religion in development of the market is widely acknowledged as well as largely abandoned in secular consumer society. The aim of this paper is to explore the theoretical concept of this phenomenon and search for the answers in regards the symbolic brands and toyed in religious rhetoric to build a narrative tradition for example the symbolic brand, and establish a community of loyal followers, which sticks strong. How do people adjust their religious and spiritual beliefs and practices in such a society? What are the limits to marketing and the branding of spiritual goods and religious practices?

**Design/methodology/approach**– the research implements a qualitative exploratory approach through the case analysis of symbolic brands. It explores the sources of religious consumer society and the most common personal adjustments (quality expectations, syncretism, religious shopping) and organizational answers (marketing and branding strategies the theoretical concept of consumer ambiguity and its effects. The goal is not to test any theory, nor apply the scheme to any particular phenomenon. Rather, to demonstrate that the different ideas and examples of the branding of religion, quasi-religions, religious-secular competition can be combined into one conceptual scheme.

**Findings** – the research shows the limitations and the difficulties encountered in religious marketing and branding. In fact, organizations’ members and/or the public may refuse to accept religious marketing and branding. Finally, marketing and branding may have obstacles due to transcendent claims, which are increasingly difficult to sustain in modern societies.

**Research limitations/implications** –the current research is limited by the exploratory approach taken, nonetheless, it still highlights that consumer’s search of

religion in brands should not always be viewed as negative. Hence, it provides new important insights into the consumption of spirituality and pursuit to the meaning of life.

**Practical implications** – the current research is contributory in that it demonstrates that in recent times the consumption of spirituality in marketing is substantially under-researched. Moreover, the current research has uncovered that individuals have embraced the market in this area and have enjoyed the symbolic meaning in branding inherent to many of the products/services offered. In the second stance, the area is an unexplored research area for societies where brand community flourishes. The current research has therefore contributed to this literature through the findings obtained, which revealed that modernization creates rules according to which individuals have the right to choose, provides the resources actually enables them to make choices, and representations and values that legitimates religious consumer behavior or open space for new believing systems.

**Originality/Value** – as the theme and the research area is not very popular among marketing and sociology researchers, the dangers of identity and loyalty to certain brand as religion is still undiscovered, especially in regards to the specific output(s) it will provide to society.

**Keywords:** branding, religion, society, symbols, believes.